

# EEOC Sues Kroger Over Religious Discrimination Issue Involving LGBT Emblem

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) filed a lawsuit Tuesday against the Kroger Co. for allegedly firing two employees for refusing to wear aprons with a multicolored heart-shaped logo.

The EEOC stated in its filing that the company's Conway, Arkansas, store "violated federal law when it fired two employees who asked for a religious accommodation to avoid wearing an emblem they believed contradicted their religious beliefs." The suit is based on the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bars discriminatory employment practices on the basis of religion.

Brenda Lawson and Trudy Rickerd are Christians. They believed the emblem endorsed LGBTQ values and that wearing it would violate their religious beliefs. One of the women offered to wear the apron with the emblem covered, and the other offered to wear a different apron without the emblem, but the company made no attempt to accommodate their requests, according to the EEOC. When the women still refused to wear the apron, Kroger disciplined them, which led to their dismissal, according to .

Kroger has launched a 2020 Pride campaign company-wide, which includes its 3514 grocery stores across 42 states. The chain is the second-largest retailer after Walmart.

"At The Kroger Co., we embrace diversity and inclusion as core values, and we ingrain these in everything we do," according to the company website. The site also notes that Kroger recently received a perfect score on the Human Rights Campaign's 2020 Corporate Equality Index in recognition of its

commitment to LGBTQ-plus inclusion and equality. Kroger also says:

*“We’re one of the few retailers willing to openly advocate for and make real change toward LGBTQ-plus diversity and inclusion, and we’re proud to offer:*

*–Same-sex partner benefits and transgender-inclusive healthcare.*

*–An Associate Resource Group that provides an uplifting community for LGBTQ-plus associates and allies.*

*–Strong alliances with LGBTQ-plus suppliers through our partnership with the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce.*

The suit was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Arkansas, Central Division, and seeks monetary relief in the form of back pay and compensatory damages, as well as an injunction against future discrimination. {eoa}